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featuring

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[News story: The Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster to visit China in a 'Golden Era' for the two countries](#)

David Lidington, the Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, will make a three-day visit to China this week, building on the announcement of a new chapter in the 'Golden Era' between the UK and China during the Prime Minister's visit earlier this year.

Mr Lidington will lead the UK's 10th UK-China Senior Leadership Forum to the country. The Leadership Forum is a unique partnership that brings together British Parliamentarians and senior members of the Communist Party of China for frank discussions, debates and collaboration.

The theme of the 10th Leadership Forum this year is 'Partners for Progress: Strengthening the UK-China relationship in the Golden Era' and will focus on practical cooperation between the UK and China in light of Brexit. Other prominent figures who are members of the Forum are former Cabinet Office Minister Oliver Letwin, Lord Mandelson and Lord Sassoon.

The Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster will give the keynote speech at the Forum's meeting in the International Department of the Communist Party of China. He is expected to discuss the importance of the relationship between Britain and China and opportunities for further cooperation on trade and other issues that will arise following Brexit. He will also give a speech about Brexit to Chevening alumni which will include members of the Chinese Government.

This will be the first Ministerial visit since the PM visited in January and comes at an important juncture in Chinese politics – straight after the National People's Congress and at the start of Xi Jinping's second Presidential term.

Mr Lidington will be meeting a number of officials from the Chinese Government, including the newly appointed Vice President, Wang Qishan. He will be the first British politician to meet Vice President Wang, who previously served as President Xi's anti-corruption tsar.

Speaking ahead of the visit, David Lidington, the Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, said,

I am delighted to be returning to China at a moment of renewed strength between our two countries. Our relationship with China is, and will remain, a clear priority for the UK Government.

As the UK prepares to leave the European Union, I am confident that we can deliver on our bold vision for a Britain outside the EU that remains open for business and is the same outward-looking, globally minded country that we always have been.

That is why I believe we are now entering a new chapter in the 'Golden Era' of UK-China relations, in which co-operation between us is stronger than ever before, and in which we can tackle mutual threats together, and take advantage of the exciting new opportunities that await us both.

News story: Prince Harry and Meghan Markle meet Invictus Games UK Team hopefuls

His Royal Highness Prince Harry and Ms Meghan Markle met Invictus Games hopefuls today at the University of Bath Sports Training Village, ahead of the fourth Invictus Games being held down under in Sydney, Australia this October.

The Invictus Games, which have previously been held in London, Orlando and Toronto, set out to harness the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect for our wounded, injured and sick servicemen and women.

Defence Minister, Tobias Ellwood, also met 2018 hopefuls today to see how they are using sport as part of their recovery journey.

Across the weekend, 5 – 8 April, hopefuls who have suffered a life-changing injury or illness will trial in nine different sports including Athletics, Archery, Wheelchair Basketball, Road Cycling, Powerlifting, Indoor Rowing, Wheelchair Rugby, Swimming and Sitting Volleyball. Last week (28-29 March), hopefuls also trialled in a new sport for the 2018 games; Sailing.

More hopefuls than ever before (451) have applied to take part in the 2018 Invictus Games and all hope to be selected as part of the 72-strong UK team that will head to Sydney. The UK team will be selected based on the benefit the Invictus Games will give an individual as part of their recovery, combined with performance and commitment to training.

The UK delegation to the 2018 Invictus Games is once again being delivered by a partnership comprising the Ministry of Defence, Help for Heroes and The Royal British Legion.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I wish all our serving troops and veterans taking part in this year's trials the best of luck. The Invictus Games demonstrate the positive impact of sport in the recovery process, and provide inspiration and opportunity to those that have suffered life changing injuries and illnesses whilst serving their country and keeping Britain safe.

The MOD is a partner in the [Defence Recovery Capability](#), a programme which helps wounded, injured and sick Service personnel either return to duty from injury or provides a mechanism to help them back into civilian life – link. A key activity of the Defence Recovery Capability is the Battle Back programme, an MOD initiative that delivers an adaptive sport and adventurous training

programme.

The [Invictus Games Sydney 2018](#) will take place from 20 – 27 October.

News story: Appointment of Edward Timpson CBE as new CAFCASS Chair

Edward Timpson CBE has been appointed as the Chair of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) from 9 April 2018 to 8 April 2021

Edward was MP for Crewe and Nantwich between 2008 and 2017. Before entering Parliament Edward spent 10 years working as a Family Law Barrister specialising in children's cases. Growing up, his family fostered 90 children over 30 years and he has 2 adopted brothers.

He was Minister of State for Children and Families from May 2015 to July 2016 and Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families at the Department for Education from July 2016 to June 2017.

CAFCASS was created under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. The body safeguards and promotes the welfare of children involved in family court proceedings

This appointment has been conducted in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Speech: "We cannot ignore what has happened in Salisbury."

Thank you very much Mr President.

We didn't seek this meeting but we take requests from the Council to meet very seriously and I am pleased to be able to update the Council on some developments, but I am also pleased to be able to provide the intellectual clarity our Russian colleague has called for and I will stick in my statement to the facts.

Following the poisoning on 4 March in Salisbury of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, the UK has launched one of the most comprehensive and complex investigations

into the use of a chemical weapon ever, it involves more than 250 police detectives. They are supported by a range of specialist experts and partners. They are trawling through more than 5000 hours of CCTV. They are examining more than 1350 seized exhibits. And they are interviewing more than 500 witnesses.

Mr President, in the UK the police are independent of government but if there are more details we can share with the Council as the investigation proceeds, we would be very happy to do so.

We all know what that investigation is under ways, it's because a military grade nerve agent was used in an attempt to kill civilians on British soil. It was carried out recklessly, and it was carried out without regard for public safety. It was a weapon of mass destruction. A British Police Officer was in a critical condition alongside the Skripals. And ordinary members of the public going about their daily business were put at risk.

Mr President, I am glad not only to be able to inform the Council that Yulia Skripal is able to communicate and is getting better, I can also clarify what the Russian Ambassador said about consular access. We have received a request from the Russian consulate. We have conveyed it to Yulia Skripal. And we await her response. This is an obligation under international law that the British Government takes very seriously but there is also the question of Ms Skripal's own wishes which need to be taken into account.

Mr President, the Russian Ambassador had several points to make about the UK demands of Russia. As he outlined, on 12 March we asked the Russian Government a clear question. Russia refused to respond and said it considered the request 'null and void'. It was indeed true, Mr President, that we asked for a response within 24 hours for an answer to the question how did a Russian developed military grade nerve agent come to be on the streets of Salisbury? And did that mean that Russia had lost control of its CW stocks? We said that Russia should declare its Novichok programme to the OPCW. We gave 24 hours Mr President because this is a weapon of mass destruction. It is no ordinary poisoning and no ordinary attack and in our view the circumstances justified that tight deadline. But, notwithstanding that, the Russians said to us the request was 'null and void'. They did not say 'please give us more time', they did not come to us and say 'we would like to look into this with you'. They rejected the very premise of the request.

We have said, as the Russian Ambassador quoted, that it is highly likely Russia carried out this assassination. The British Government came to that conclusion because the positive identification by experts at Porton Down of the specific chemical used is a type of Novichok nerve agent. Porton Down, Mr President, is an accredited laboratory under, and it conforms to, the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is allowed to conduct protective research. The second reason that helped us come to our conclusion was the knowledge that Russia has produced this nerve agent within the last 10 years and remains capable of doing so and as the Prime Minister made clear within the British Parliament we know that the Russian state has investigated ways of assassination through the use of nerve agent. The third reason is Russia's record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations and I don't want to

detain the Council Mr President by going through a long list but I can provide examples if anyone would like to hear them. And we also made our own assessment that Russia views defectors as suitable targets for assassination and indeed there are public statements from Russian leaders to that effect.

I'd like if I may, Mr President, just to say something about the use of the phrase 'highly likely'. We use this phrase because under the British system only a court can finally determine culpability so the use of the phrase 'highly likely' is a reflection on the judicial process and should not be construed as casting doubt whatsoever on the likelihood of Russia being responsible. I would also like to take this opportunity to address the Russian Ambassador's comment about Porton Down contradicting the Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson. There was no contradiction. The Foreign Secretary was making clear that Porton Down were sure the nerve agent was a Novichok – a point they have subsequently reinforced. He goes on in the same interview to make clear why based on that information, additional intelligence and, as I said, the lack of alternative explanation from the Russians, we have reached the conclusion we have. What the Foreign Secretary said then, and what Porton Down have said recently, is fully consistent with what we have said throughout. In contrast Mr President we have had innumerable theories from the Russians, I think we have counted some 24 in all. On 21 March for example the Russian Foreign Ministry said they believed terrorists did it. On the 14 March, Mr Lavrov said the British response was aimed at distracting from Brexit. Mr President, the use of chemical weapons on any country's territory is far too serious for these theories to hold water.

The Chemical Weapons Convention, which came into force 21 years ago, is clear in its Article VII that states must adopt legislation criminalising activity prohibited under the convention. That's why the UK is conducting a full investigation of the incident, including under our own Chemical Weapons Act. Because of this, in addition to the UK criminal investigation, we invited the OPCW, the relevant international body, to assist in verifying our analysis and this is on the basis of Article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This mandates the Technical Secretariat to provide technical assistance and technical evaluation to States Parties.

Everything we have done, Mr President, has been consistent with the Convention on Chemical Weapons. And if I may say so, Mr President, I won't take any lectures on morality or our responsibilities under Conventions from a country, which as this Council debated yesterday, has done so much to block the proper investigation of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The UK's track record on that, Mr President, speaks for itself.

On 21 March, OPCW deployed a team to the UK to visit the locations where the victims were exposed to a toxic chemical. The DG briefed the OPCW Executive Committee yesterday on their actions. OPCW expert staff collected environmental samples from the scene and biomedical samples from the victims. OPCW has verified the chain of custody. These samples have been sent to several designated laboratories for testing. Analysis from the laboratories will now be returned to the OPCW, who will produce a report. Contrary to the Russian claims, Mr President, the United Kingdom looks forward to sharing its findings once we have received that report.

Yesterday, Russia tabled a resolution at the OPCW Executive Committee proposing a joint investigation. Mr President, there are several ways to view this joint investigation. I think the metaphor that I find most apt is that of an arsonist turned firefighter, but in this particular instance, the arsonist wishes to investigate his own fire.

Having failed to get a joint investigation, the resolution only received 6 out of 41 votes in favour. And without waiting for the outcome of OPCW testing, Russia has reverted to a familiar path of undermining the international institution involved. There is no other construction we can place for Mr Lavrov's remarks today that Russia "will accept results of the OPCW Salisbury poisoning investigation only if Russian experts participate in it." I am sorry Mr President, but that does not make it an independent investigation.

If Russia insists on having its own experts, it seeks to move away from the Chemical Weapons Convention's stipulation and it is setting a test that no independent investigation could credibly tolerate.

This is part of a wider pattern of irresponsible Russian behaviour. Russia discredited the Joint Investigative Mechanism into use of chemical weapons in Syria. Members of the Council will be familiar with the pattern of aggression over the years in Georgia and Crimea. There has been the shooting down of MH17, and there has been a bungled attempt at a coup in Montenegro. And each time, Mr President, these acts are accompanied by distortion and disinformation. The same sort of distortion and disinformation we saw yesterday in the Hague, in the Russian press conferences, and in the Security Council today.

Mr President, whilst we ourselves would not have called this meeting today, we hope to be able to brief the Council further once we receive the report from OPCW. We do believe that it is right that the Security Council remains seized of this flagrant use of chemical weapons, and it is that use which threatens international peace and security. The threats to the chemical weapons convention from attacks in Syria, in Malaysia, and now the United Kingdom pose a serious challenge to the non-proliferation regime that this Council and others have carefully constructed in response to the terrible events of the past. There is one country among us Mr President, Russia, which is playing fast and loose with our collective security and the international institutions that protect us.

It is that reason, Mr President, that leads people to accuse Russia and to take steps against her. It is not out of lack of friendship with the Russian people or lack of respect from Russia as a country. My own Foreign Secretary visited in the hope of establishing a more productive relationship with Foreign Minister Lavrov. But we cannot ignore what has happened in Salisbury. We cannot ignore Russia turning a blind eye to the use of chemical weapons in Syria and in Salisbury. And we cannot ignore the way that Russia seeks to undermine the international institutions, which have kept us safe since the end of the Second World War.

Mr President, we believe that the UK's actions stand up to any scrutiny. We

have acted in accordance with the CWC throughout, and through the body charged for these purposes, the OPCW, we are happy to come to Council at any time. We would be very willing to hold an open briefing at our Mission here in New York if there are Members of the UN that still have questions. We have nothing to hide, Mr President, but I do fear that Russia might have something to fear.

Thank you very much.

Rebuttal by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council meeting on Salisbury

Thank you very much Mr President, I won't detain colleagues for very long. There is another very good quote from Alice in Wonderland which is: "sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast" so I think that's the quote the suits my Russian colleague best. I just wanted to say that I am committed to keeping the Council updated. We will share with the Council at the Council's request as much information as we can, as and when we have it and in accordance with developments.